The Crush by Anonymous

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Summary:

After moving in with the Byers, El finds herself discovering strange new feelings for the matriarch of the house.

The Crush

The worst thing about the fallout from Starcourt is figuring out just where to go from there. Hopper's dead, and El can't even bring herself to speak to Mike, or the others...

Or at all, really.

She just wants to lay there, silent, unmoving. El is no stranger to death... but this one hurts especially.

"El?" Joyce pokes her head into El's current room with a kind, worried tone. "Dinner's ready."

El does not respond.

"Please, sweetie..." Joyce addresses. "You need to eat."

El looks to her and nods.

She always liked it when Joyce called her that.

El's constantly plagued with nightmares because of what happened. Flashes of Mike, Max, and the others being ripped apart alive by that giant spider monster while she's being forced to watch.

More than once, El wakes up caked in her own sweat and tears.

More than once, Joyce is there to help.

The older woman wraps El tightly in her arms and lets El cry herself back to sleep, feeling warm.

She always liked it when Joyce held her like that.

It takes El a moment to realize just what's happening, but she does. Being around Joyce gives her these warm, bubbly feelings that she doesn't quite recognize...

At first.

They're the same things that Mike had once made her feel.

After watching a movie on the TV where there were two girls, kissing, El looks at Joyce, such a strong, caring, loving woman, and likes to imagine herself like that with her.

Would Joyce be different to Mike? Softer? More loving?

In any event, El wants to know...

But she knows she can never know.

And it kills her.